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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

VOL. 39, NO. 16

March 4, 1946

WHOLE NO. 1042

LATIN AND THE NEW INTERNATIONALISM (Korfmacher)

THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

*Do your second-year students
read Latin for sense?*

If they do, you'll be sending them on to third-year Latin, to French, Spanish, Russian, or whatever other language they may later study, with a priceless skill.

If they don't, wouldn't this coming spring term—their fourth term of Latin, in which for the first time the bulk of their work is precisely reading—be an ideal time for special training in good reading habits.

COMPREHENSION READINGS FOR SECOND-YEAR LATIN, by John Flagg Gummere, gives teachers practical help in developing such habits. If you don't know this book, ask for an examination copy.

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THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

Published weekly (on Monday) except in weeks in which there is an academic vacation or Armistice Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, New Year's Day, Washington's Birthday, Easter, or Memorial Day. A volume contains approximately twenty-five issues.

Owner and Publisher: The Classical Association of the Atlantic States. Place of Publication: Bennett Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania. Printed by The Beaver Printing Company, Greenville, Pennsylvania.

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Price, \$2.00 per volume in the Western Hemisphere; elsewhere \$2.50. All subscriptions run by the volume. Single numbers: to subscribers 15 cents, to others 25 cents prepaid (otherwise 25 cents and 35 cents). If affidavit to invoice is required, sixty cents must be added to the subscription price. For residents of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, or the District of Columbia, a subscription to *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* (or, alternatively, to *The Classical Journal*) is included in the membership fee of The Classical Association of the Atlantic States, whose members are also entitled to *The Classical Outlook* and *The Classical Journal* at special prices in combinations available from the Secretary.

Entered as second-class matter November 7, 1945, at the Post Office at Philadelphia, Pa., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in the Act of February 28, 1925, authorized October 14, 1938.

Volume 39 contains issues dated: October 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; November 12, 26; December 3, 10, 17 (1945); January 7, 14, 21; February 4, 18; March 4, 11, 18; April 8, 15, 29; May 6, 13, 20; June 3 (1946).

LATIN AND THE NEW INTERNATIONALISM

Whatever may be our uncertainties and questionings as we look at the America of tomorrow, this at least seems reasonably sure—that the cause of isolationism is a lost cause, and that America in the future will take a responsible role, perhaps a dominant role, in international affairs. Internationalism, therefore, in a manner never previously engaged in by this nation, save in temporary emergencies and under stress of a compelling force such as World Wars I and II, will seemingly be the order of the new day and a very real part of the new life just ahead of us.

Under these circumstances, we who are devoted to the cause of Latin and who are at the moment discussing 'The Place of Latin in the Postwar Secondary Curricula' may well ask whether Latin may be 'integrated' (and I trust the word may be used without any implication of surrender to the 'integrating' aims of extreme educationism) with the objectives of that new internationalism and with such training as the secondary school may make for it. In such an inquiry we may prescind from the academic question whether or not Latin must mesh with certain more or less utilitarian aims in order to justify its existence. We who are wedded to the tradition of humane education are satisfied in our minds that it need not so mesh; and yet we are, I trust, equally gratified if we can realize that our chosen subject, while realizing all the good that we expect of it culturally and humanely, can nevertheless be of service towards significant and well defined ends that America as a nation will probably envision.

It strikes me, then, that of various ways in which the study of secondary-school Latin may contribute to the new internationalism of the United States of tomorrow, these three are particularly appealing: (1) Latin can foster the language sense; (2) Latin can foster a reasonable tolerance; (3) Latin can foster a true universality.

'The challenge to our colleges and universities now and in the future,' remarked Mr. Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., when Secretary of State, at a Special Convocation of New York University, 'is as unmistakable as their opportunity. It is for them to assert anew the great principles which have given rise to our civilization. It is for them to strengthen the ties with our own past, that glorious history of a people intent on freedom and happiness for all in a law-abiding world society. And, surely, if the colleges with their smaller enrollment, proportionately, are to look to the future, the high schools which will probably have even larger percentages of the total population in them than hitherto, must also look to the new world of tomorrow.'

We may envision such a world, at some distant date, as having a common tongue, so that all men everywhere will talk the same language and immediately comprehend one another's utterances with no need of interpreters or commentators of any sort. But that state will not be the world of our tomorrow, nor of the tomorrow of our immediate descendants. One of the most difficult hurdles in the race to international amity and accord is precisely linguistic difference, a difference that may be but an annoyance to a person of culture, but which may prove to be a genuine emotional blockade to the more or less untrained individual. The only sure way of surmounting the obstacle that arises from the feeling that those who speak another language are for that reason 'strange' and 'odd' is to learn a foreign language oneself. Now Latin is, for the student who knows only English, sufficiently distinguished from his native tongue to indoctrinate him in the conviction that other people's languages are not in themselves a proof of oddity, and yet it is sufficiently related to make an approach to it reasonable and ready.

We shall need, further, in the world of tomorrow to have not merely an understanding of the propriety and the naturalness of various tongues in the family of na-

tions, but an active ability to handle one or more foreign languages, and this on the part of larger numbers of persons than have had such abilities up to now. Men and women, as they leave school, will probably find themselves at times in positions of commerce or government where they will need to know a foreign language. Now, it is true that they will not be able to foresee the particular national group whose language they will find it profitable to learn, and it is precisely here that Latin can make its claim. For we have been as a nation rather disdainful of languages other than our own, nor have we any strong tradition that favors knowing a second or even a third language as a tool for speaking, and reading, and writing. Latin, with its many additional advantages, is thus in a strategically excellent position as an educative device to direct the young high school student into his first acquaintance with another tongue, to awaken and foster in him that language sense which will make the handling and learning of another tongue a natural and reasonable thing to do; an action in tune with the new day, when the airplane and the radio, and above all, the spirit behind the new characters of world unity, make the most distant peoples our next-door neighbors.

2

As a second possible service of Latin in the new internationalism facing America, we may, I think, regard Latin as an educative tool to foster a reasonable tolerance. A reasonable tolerance is obviously to be sought, since none but the most avid internationalists would expect America to forego its individuality to the extent of accommodating itself weakly to the ways and ideals of the rest of the world. Yet we cannot expect to get along with people in the new world order unless we understand them, and are willing to comprehend the often difficult fact that there are more ways than one of doing a thing which admittedly should be done. Every fair-minded man will agree that it is not tolerance to accept with an easy nonchalance, murder and plundering as a way of life on the part of our neighbors. But every fair-minded man will agree with equal readiness that it is tolerance to acquiesce to our neighbor's formality in social dealings when, let us say, we favor informality; or to accustom ourselves to his less hurried way of conducting commercial interchanges in his own country; or to realize that the actual working of a democratic form of government in his nation may be different from that which we know in this country.

Tolerance of this sort, though obviously elementary, is by no means a universal possession of Americans. Nor is tolerance born with us as human beings; it is an acquired virtue. Children are of all persons perhaps the most intolerant. The slightest variation from the routine with which they are familiar at home, the

slightest lapse from a fixed uniformity displayed by another child is enough to raise the familiar childish jeer, as if at something ultra-mundane or infra-human.

Latin, if properly taught, cannot fail to make clear to the young mind of the secondary school student that a thing worth doing can be done oftentimes in more ways than one. Language is the expression of thought, and thought is surely worth expressing. Language is one of the most distinctive perfections that we, as human beings, possess. Yet I say in English, 'How are you?' My French neighbor asks, 'How do you do?' —'Comment allez vous?' The Roman of old seemed to be inquiring what I was doing, for his greeting was 'Quid agis?' I sum up a neat array of arguments by saying 'in view of these facts,' but Cicero would have said 'quae cum ita sint'—'which things, since they are so.' I speak of events that occurred 'during the dictatorship of Caesar,' but in that gentleman's day men said 'Caesare dictatore,'—'Caesar being dictator,' and even in that attempt at literalness I must supply the 'being.' I may say in English, either 'I believe that he is the bravest,' or 'I believe him to be the bravest,' but only the latter, *Credo eum esse fortissimum*, is possible in Classical Latin.

Any Latin teacher could multiply such examples indefinitely. They are part, we say mechanically, of English idiom as opposed to Latin idiom. But they are really far more than linguistic differences. A Cicero or a Livy expressing himself in stately periodic sentences, utterly at variance with the brevity and crispness of modern American speech, is manifesting in words a phase of the Roman mentality—its fondness for order and decorum and impressive gravity, its sense of co-ordination and subordination, its understanding of law, and headship, and thorough organization. It is the part of the good Latin teacher, simply and without annoying profundities that would puzzle the young mind, to explain such differences linguistically, because his first task is to teach a language; but to go beyond the merely linguistic also, and to draw from language differences the analogy of differences in other human activities as well, as between nation and nation, individual and individual, age and age.

And for the young mind, I believe, such an approach to the problem of differences and to the ideal of a reasonable tolerance is a sane and workable approach. Mere abstractions, unmoored and unsecured, are likely to elude the high school student with the ease of an airy sprite slipping from clumsy mortal grasp. But an abstraction firmly anchored to so palpable and universal a thing as language can be understood, I believe, and be made to be of lasting service for the future citizen of a world that has determined to live in closer friendliness and cooperation than it has lived for many a century past.

3.

Again, we may maintain, Latin can foster a true universality of the sort that the new internationalism will most vitally require. We cannot be cosmopolites if our vision is bounded by the confines of our own county, or state, or nation; nor, again, if our vision is limited by the confines of the decade, or the century, in which we are living. Utter satisfaction with the ways of our immediate community, a lack of curiosity as to the doings of men and women beyond our shores, breeds a comfortable provincialism, but is a poor attitude for one expected to be something of a citizen of the world. Sometimes the high-school boy or girl must be almost violently jarred from a compliant complacency in his own surroundings, so as to be aroused to the larger and ampler interests that beckon to him from all sides and bespeak his intelligent cooperation for the building and securing of a better universal society.

And here again elusive abstractions are not the proper means in teaching technique. One device that is workable, I think, is Latin properly taught. The language is almost inseparable from the people who spoke it, and the culture that perfected it. The alert teacher of secondary-school Latin, realizing this basic fact, will not, to be sure, go to the extreme of making his Latin classes mere lecture periods on Roman life and history. He will, as I have said already, first of all teach Latin, for that is his basic function as a language teacher. But in the very task of teaching the language he will transport his class to the people whose tongue Latin was, to their everyday lives, so different from our own and yet naturally having so much in common with our own; to their ideals of piety, and patriotism, and family solidarity; to their achievements in literature and in the other arts; to their inestimable great contribution of the ideal of organization in government; to their admirable zeal in the establishment and codification of the civil law.

The good teacher will, in a word, bring his class to the understanding that human culture is not a thing of one age, but of all ages; not a possession of some single super-race only, but of all races. In the words of Walter Lippman, writing in *The American Scholar* (10, 1941, page 184).

...The historic fact is that the institutions we cherish—and now we must defend against the most determined and efficient attack ever organized against them—are the products of a culture, which, as Gilson put it: "is essentially the culture of Greece,

inherited by the Romans, transfused by the Fathers of the Church with the religious teachings of Christianity, and progressively enlarged by countless numbers of artists, writers, scientists, and philosophers from the beginning of the Middle Ages up to the first third of the nineteenth century".

In a word, the young mind that has caught the ideal of appreciating, vertically, so to say, the cultural contributions of the past, so as to sympathize with the achievements and aims of men long since dead, will be far readier to appreciate, horizontally, contemporary cultures of fellow-men now alive. Such cultures will the more easily be understood as but manifestations, with national and racial differences, of a common cultural heritage; or, again, if they are cultures outside the range of our Western tradition, they will be looked at with an open mind rather than a closed mind, and with a determination to appraise them for the excellences which they may prove to possess, rather than with a foreordained prejudice against anything that they may disclose, for the simple reason of its difference.

* * *

Latin, then, we may insist, does have a place in the new internationalism, as a means of fostering language sense, of fostering a reasonable tolerance, of fostering a true universality. And yet, because it is part of the discipline of humane studies, it will steadily resist any leveling or regimenting of the individual. It will make no blind surrender to a nationalism or internationalism that may seek to absorb the individual in any grandiose scheme of a super-society disdaining the rights and privileges to which each of us, as a human being, may justly lay claim. Rather, it will aim to school the individual to the living of the good and full life, in which individual perfection marches hand in hand with the amplest sense of duty to God, to fellowman, to country, and to the society of nations.

WILLIAM CHARLES KORFMACHER
ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY

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THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING
of the
CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION OF THE ATLANTIC STATES

Friday, May 17 and Saturday, May 18, 1946

HOTEL PENNSYLVANIA

New York City

with the cooperation of the New York Classical Club

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The Hotel Pennsylvania, in which all of the sessions will be held, is on Seventh Avenue at Thirty-Third Street (opposite the Pennsylvania Railroad Station). Take the Ballroom elevator to the fourth floor to all of the sessions.

Hotel Reservations. The Hotel Pennsylvania is reserving for members and guests of the Association 80 double rooms (twin beds and bath) at \$6.60, \$7.10, \$7.70, \$8.25, \$8.80; and 20 single rooms (with bath) at \$3.85, \$4.40, \$4.95, \$5.50, UNTIL MAY 10. Of these rooms those at \$4.40 and \$7.70 are most available. Indicate first, second, and third choice; also room-mate, if you are to share your room. Please make your reservation as early as May 5, if possible, with Miss Sue Braslow, Sales Representative, The Hotel Pennsylvania, New York 1, N. Y.

Dinner on Friday. Dress at the dinner meeting on Friday will be optional. The price per plate (including gratuity and city tax) will be \$4.50. Please make your reservation with Mrs. Helen H. Love (301 East 21st Street, New York 10, N. Y.; phone, only in evening: Gramercy 32898) not later than May 15. All reservations later than May 15 must be made through the Banquet Department of the Hotel Pennsylvania. The dinner will be held in the Keystone Room (take Ballroom elevator to the fourth floor).

Registration, Mail, Telegrams. All persons who attend any of the sessions are requested to register at the desk near the entrance to the meeting room. Mail and other communications may be sent to the meeting in care of the Hotel Pennsylvania.

FRIDAY, MAY 17

1:00 P.M. Luncheon Meeting of the Executive Committee

2:30 P.M. Paper and Discussion

Professor Donald B. Durham, Hamilton College, President of the Association, presiding

What Next?

Mr. Edward Day Curtis, Lawrenceville School

(After the paper a brief business meeting will be held)

Ubinam Gentium Sumus? Panel Discussion led by President Donald B. Durham

Miss Edith M. Jackson, West Chester High School, Pa.; Professor Alice E. Kober, Brooklyn College; Professor Walter H. Freeman, New Jersey State Teachers' College, Montclair; Dr. Edward Coyle, Stuyvesant High School, New York; Mr. C. Howard Smith, Perkiomen School, Pa.

7:30 P.M. Dinner Meeting (Dress Optional)

President Donald B. Durham presiding

Greetings from The Classical Association of New England through its President, Professor LeRoy C. Barret, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut

Greetings from The American Classical League through its President, Professor B. L. Ullman, University of North Carolina

Address: The Present Condition of Classical Monuments in Italy and Greece, and Prospects for Future Study in Those Lands (Illustrated)

Professor David M. Robinson, The Johns Hopkins University

SATURDAY, MAY 18

9:30 A.M. Papers

Mr. Jacob Mann, Boys' High School, Brooklyn,
President of the New York Classical Club, presiding

Linguis hominum loquar aut disertorum?

Franklin B. Krauss, The Pennsylvania State College, Secretary-Treasurer of the Association

Plato's Doctrine of Metempsychosis and Its Source

Dr. Herbert S. Long, Colgate University

(Annual meeting of the New York Classical Club)

Some Aspects of Isocrates' Writings

Professor La Rue Van Hook, Columbia University

The Symbolum in Firmicus Maternus—"de errore profanarum religionum" (c. 22)

Dom Thomas Michels, O.S.B., Prior of St. Paul's Priory, Keyport, New Jersey

12:30 P.M. Luncheon Meeting of the Executive Committee

2:15 P.M. Annual Business Meeting of the Association

President Donald B. Durham presiding

Papers

A Portrait of Greek Island Life

Professor Irene Ringwood Arnold, Bennett Junior College

Plautus: The Other Nineteen Plays

Professor George E. Duckworth, Princeton University

The New Translation of the Fathers

Reverend Joseph M. F. Marique, S.J., Fordham University, President of the Catholic Classical Association of New York

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